

**WASHINGTON STATE BIODIVERSITY COUNCIL
SUMMARY MINUTES**

*DATE: March 12, 2008
TIME: 9:00 a.m.*

*PLACE: The Natural Resources Building
Olympia, Washington*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Maggie Coon, Chair
Josh Weiss, Vice Chair
Jim Armstrong
Leonard Bauer
Ken Berg
Dave Brittell
Donna Darm
Rob Fimbel
Duane Fagergren
John Gamon
John Garner
Pete Heide
Ron Juris
John Marzluff
Ikuno Masterson
Mike Mosman
Dave Roseleip
Carol Smith
Kathy Taylor
Jamie Tolfree
Megan White

The Nature Conservancy
WA State Association of Counties
Spokane Conservation District
CTED
US Fish and Wildlife
WA Department of Fish & Wildlife
NOAA Fisheries
State Parks
Puget Sound Partnership
Department of Natural Resources
Tacoma Nature Center
WA Forest Protection Association
Diamond J. Farms, Inc
University of Washington
ESA Adolfson
Port Blakely Tree Farm
Agriculture & Forestry Education Foundation
WA State Conservation Commission
Department of Ecology
Skamania County
WA State Department of Transportation

PRESENTERS:

Kaleen Cottingham
Paul Bergman
Ben Fields
John Mankowski
Kelly McAllister
Joanne Schuett-Hames
David Stokes
Steven Walters
Nancy Warner
Jen Watkins

Recreation and Conservation Office
Puget Sound Partnership
Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship (IRIS)
Natural Resources Policy Advisor to the Governor
Wildlife Connectivity Working Group/WSDOT
Wildlife Connectivity Working Group/WDFW
University of Washington
University of Washington
Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship (IRIS)
Wildlife Connectivity Working Group/Conservation NW

STAFF:

Lynn Helbrecht
Sarah Gage
Rachel LeBaron Anderson

ACTIONS TAKEN

Item	Action	Reference
Meeting minutes	Approved	Page 2

SUMMARY OF MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

- Dr. David Stokes, University of Washington, presented research findings on elements in local planning programs that can advance biodiversity conservation.
- Nancy Warner and Ben Fields, Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship, described progress on the North Central Washington early action project, especially adapting the Conservation Opportunity Framework to the local level and the developing photo-monitoring trails.
- Paul Bergman, Communications Director of the Puget Sound Partnership, discussed results from recent polling on environmental issues in the Puget Trough ecoregion.
- Council members developed personalized messages about biodiversity, why it's important, and what we are doing about it.
- Dr. Steven Walters summarized progress on the biodiversity scorecard.
- John Mankowski, Natural Resources Policy Advisor to Governor Chris Gregoire, discussed the importance of the statewide habitat connectivity analysis and asked the Council to clarify what role it will have with this issue. Members of the Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group presented their work to the Council.
- Three Council working groups (Science, Education and Outreach and Land Use and Local Planning) updated the Council on their activities and priorities.

OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Maggie Coon, Chair, opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. She thanked three departing council members for their service.

- Bonnie Bunning has retired from Department of Natural Resources.
- Nina Carter has left Audubon Washington for a job with the Growth Management Hearings Board
- Cullen Stevenson has left Puget Sound Partnership for a new job as budget director for the Department of Natural Resources

Other council member changes: Josh Weiss has moved from the WA Forest Protection Association to the WA State Association of Counties (local government); Pete Heide is being nominated to serve as the new WA Forest Protection Association representative (forestry); Mike Mosman of Port Blakely Tree Farms has been nominated to replace Mark Schaffel (private landowners). Council members to fill the remaining slots are being recruited.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

COUNCIL BUSINESS ITEMS:

Approval of Minutes

Maggie called for a **MOTION** to approve the March 12, 2008 meeting minutes. Dave Roseleip **MOVED** approval of the minutes. Dave Brittel **SECONDED**. The Council **APPROVED** the minutes as presented.

Kaleen Cottingham, Director of Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), updated the council on the following legislative issues:

- The Governor's Boards and Commissions Initiative. Five bills currently in the legislature address cutting some number of the 500 boards and commissions in Washington. The Biodiversity Council is not created in statute so is not included in any bill.
- The Governor is convening a workgroup to consider a reorganization of natural resource functions. Agency directors have begun the discussion, but the effort will be primarily after the legislative session. Discussion is likely to be open and include more than agency directors. Robin Arnold Williams is the lead staff member in the Governor's Office.

Workplan Highlights and Budget Update

Lynn provided an overview. The Council has five early action projects. The budget is on track; our funding allows unused funds to be carried into the next biennium. Lynn clarified that the council did not

get the project money it requested in the Governor's budget. The contract with Marc Daudon of Cascadia Consulting is nearly over; he may return to facilitate the June meeting. Council member recruitment is taking time. All the working groups except Incentives met this past quarter and are doing well; the Incentives group is currently soliciting for additional members.

Staff are working on publications and presentations for outreach. The council co-sponsored a workshop on climate change and adaptation strategies for fish and wildlife last month. Maggie will be presenting at the Salmon Recovery Funding Board project conference in April. .

LAND USE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Promoting Biodiversity Conservation in Local Planning

John Garner introduced David Stokes, University of Washington, co-author of a study published in the journal *Conservation Biology*. David shared key findings from that study, in which planning departments were surveyed about conservation science in local planning.

- Having a conservation specialist on staff, the qualities of the local region, and availability of funding are three factors that most influence a jurisdiction undertaking biodiversity conservation.
- Planners in the Seattle area identified increased funding, greater public support, and more support from electeds as factors that would most improve biodiversity conservation.
- Time spent, acres protected, and dollars spent are not good measures of success. Society and communities have to decide on goals—what ecological functions and species to conserve.
- Planners reported that regulations drive conservation planning and that collaboration is both frequent and important. Collaboration is primarily related to development, not conservation.

David also reported preliminary results from a follow-up study in which researchers interviewed planning directors.

- Planning directors of high performing departments reported that the most effective planning mechanisms are cluster zoning, transfer of development rights, incentive zoning, conservation subdivisions, and impact fees.
- Respondents reported not using the term biodiversity; it is seen as a nebulous, broad, complex mandate. "Biodiversity conservation doesn't have an analytical basis for judging success."
- A common impression is that developed jurisdictions offer little biodiversity conservation potential.
- High performing jurisdictions report that community values drive biodiversity conservation; low performers report that state and federal mandates drive it.
- Human-centered values such as aesthetics, quality of life, and rural essence drive conservation, as do flagship species or places (e.g., salmon, bald eagles, orcas; Mountain to Sound Greenway).

Overall, David and his co-authors make the following recommendations:

1. Increase efforts to educate the public and provide information that planners can apply to public education,
2. Improve communication about the word biodiversity, or use more accessible terminology when speaking to the public.
3. Educate the public about local biodiversity elements that can serve a flagship role.
4. Identify biodiversity elements that benefit humans, and make explicit those human benefits.
5. Promote funding of local planning for biodiversity conservation, biodiversity specialists in local planning departments, and collaboration with other jurisdictions.

BREAK

Land Use/Local Government Working Group

Working Group lead Leonard Bauer summarized the group's activities and top priorities.

North Central Washington Regional Pilot – Early Action Project

Nancy Warner, Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship (IRIS), shared progress on their multi-faceted regional project. It has three parts, each with three components.

Nature of Place

Regional Food Systems

Healthy Lands

-
- Gathering Our Voice
 - Connecting with Nature
 - Witnessing Change
 - Family Farm Summit
 - Regional Food Assessment
 - Ten Reasons to Eat Locally
 - Stewardship Cooperative
 - NCW Biodiversity Council
 - Habitat Farming

Funding from the Biodiversity Council is enabling IRIS to foster 1) a locally useful version of the Conservation Opportunity Framework (COF); 2) development of a north central Washington biodiversity council; and 3) a photo-monitoring trail network.

IRIS has convened local planners and policy makers to refine the COF. The participants identified key needs: knowing the species/plant communities underlying the biodiversity significance layer; using locally relevant data for the “risk” layer (e.g., current land use, zoning); incorporating freshwater data.

Next steps will be: an interpretive guide to the COF; a tool for viewing freshwater and terrestrial biodiversity significance data; and convening a regional group to test use of the local COF.

Ben Fields introduced *Witnessing Change* <www.witnessingchange.org>. Using digital cameras and websites, people can view a property as a land manager does, and add photo data of their own. . This project is starting with three landowners and geo-referenced photo monitoring trails. Land managers control access and project objectives. Some land managers may use this monitoring tool for their own purposes without allowing public access. Ben and Nancy are working with Steven Walters to integrate this tool can be incorporated into the scorecard.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Education and Outreach Working Group

Working group lead Ikuno Masterson discussed the group's activities and top priorities. The workgroup asked the council to suggest other outreach opportunities.

Talking to the Public about Biodiversity and its Importance

Paul Bergman, Communications Director, Puget Sound Partnership, presented slides with the results of recent polling on how Washingtonians rate the importance of environmental issues.

The poll showed:

- 20% of people think Puget Sound has a problem, but most think repair is already happening.
- Important to emphasize shared responsibility.
- Focus on the threats is more effective than focus on existing conditions.
- Water resonates with people; make a strong land/water connection
- Use specific language: “Polluted storm water runoff that flows into our rivers, creeks and the Sound”

Council Discussion:

- In catering messages to what the public wants to hear, are we losing something? The public needs to hear the bad news along with the good.
 - First goal is just to raise public concern. This is a long-term process.
- People need to see that the end goal is possible.
- The economy affects the goal of getting Puget Sound clean by 2020—can we do this?
 - Tie conservation goals to jobs—cleaning up Puget Sound must become a revenue and job source.

WORKING LUNCH

Council members viewed “Action Now for Life on Earth,” a video created by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (<http://www.cbd.int/videos/>)

Developing a personalized message about biodiversity and the Council

Staff introduced the international context of biodiversity conservation and previous research on communicating about biodiversity, the book *Life. Nature. The Public. Making the Connection*. Council

members undertook an exercise to develop a personalized “elevator speech” about biodiversity; why it’s important, and what we are doing about it.

Council Discussion:

- Concrete examples resonate with people.
- Tie biodiversity back to landowners and real-life situations. What people do on their land affects everything downstream.
- Elements make a place is unique. Losing those special qualities loses that uniqueness.
- We need to remember to give people a measure of hope.

SCIENCE AND INFORMATION

Science Working Group

Working group lead Rob Fimbel updated the Council. He commented that the next phases for the Conservation Opportunity Framework include making it more useful locally and rolling out the freshwater data layer. Climate change is emerging as a focus for the working group.

Biodiversity Scorecard – progress report and draft indicators

Steven Walters and members of the Science Committee shared a summary of progress to date.

- December 2008–February 2009: interviews for insights, suggestions, contacts.
- January–February 2009: review of indicators, criteria for selection. Technical expert workshop.
- March 2009: review draft indicators.

Interviews surfaced the following issues: what scale is relevant to decision makers; how many data are sufficient; need to emphasize conservation incentives; need to emphasize efficiency and clarity. The technical expert workshop brought together researchers and practitioners who reviewed the approach, the conceptual framework, categories of indicators, and criteria for selecting draft indicators.

Council Discussion

- The ideal (what would we measure if we could) vs. the real (what data sets are available now, especially given existing limited resources). In this first generation scorecard, will be able to measure some things immediately; will need to build capacity for others—technology is improving.
- An example of an indicator is pollinators. Currently have counts of hummingbirds. In future, tap into butterfly hobbyists, i.e., use indicators that are amenable to citizen science efforts.
- Relate scorecard directly to Strategy. Build on, join other efforts, but remember our unique niche.

BREAK

Development of a Statewide Habitat Connectivity Plan and the Western Governors Association (WGA) Initiative

John Mankowski, Natural Resources Policy Advisor to Governor Chris Gregoire, discussed the importance of the statewide habitat connectivity plan. Habitat connectivity is a project of the Wildlife Habitat Council of the Western Governors Association (WGA). It’s important to look across state boundaries and at species movement both yearly and long-term (mediated by climate change). Policy makers need this information before planning renewable energy projects (wind, solar, geothermal).

Washington is leading in providing scientifically defensible information. The information must identify upfront where conflicts with corridors/connectivity will be to avoid crisis-driven policy. Other customers for this information include the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, land trades, Section 6 grant money, and the state’s Wildlife Action Plans.

Joanne Schuett-Hames (WDFW) and Kelly McAllister (WSDOT), co-leads for the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working group, and Jen Watkins, Conservation Northwest, shared progress on developing a statewide habitat connectivity analysis. Their effort began originally in response to Washington Department of Transportation Executive Order 1031, but has since been recognized as the means by which Washington State can respond to the WGA initiative. .

Kelly introduced the conceptual model and the list of species vulnerable due to loss of habitat connectivity. The working group is using a focal species approach in a GIS model, linking species with vegetation class and degree of barriers.

Joanne presented the workgroup's goal, to preserve and restore wildlife connectivity through a single, coordinated effort (rather than separate smaller groups). Representatives from many conservation groups participate and others are welcome. The group's work is subject to expert peer review.

Jen described the project's communication and outreach, and noted that Lynn is participating on the communication subcommittee. They are addressing how best to introduce and discuss the issue to increase awareness and understanding of how the analysis could be used. The statewide connectivity analysis is scheduled for release in December 2009.

Council Discussion

Wildlife Habitat Connectivity and the Conservation Opportunity Framework

- The COF considers more than one threat (fragmentation), has a larger perspective.
- Connectivity data are for terrestrial species; do not consider bird flight corridors, for example.
- Next steps for the COF include refinements, such as integrating freshwater data and addressing climate change.
- The goal has been to adaptively manage the COF over time—incorporating connectivity could lead to next generation of COF.
- A simple overlay of the connectivity map with the COF was suggested as a relatively straightforward way to see how the two data sets overlap.

Technical considerations

- Will connectivity work lead to engineering guidelines?
- WSDOT to look at most critical, correctable problems—"environmental retrofit."
- This effort based on focal species. In the future could address habitats, plant communities.

Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Outreach

- Much land is in private ownership—need to reach out to private landowners.
- Outreach important to counties and local governments—locals need to see how it all fits together.
- The Biodiversity Council allocated \$4000 for an early action project to facilitate outreach and conversations with private landowners.
- Habitat connectivity is important for people's safety—road kills/collisions are dangerous—that's one of the important messages.

Policy considerations

- The connectivity analysis is a scientific product, but it may be used to inform policy.
- This connectivity information can inform strategic planning and possibly greater coordination between state and non-governmental organizations.
- The connectivity analysis is not designed to be an action plan. Options for developing an action plan are being discussed.

Role of the Washington Biodiversity Council

- Connectivity and biodiversity conservation are related efforts, but specific role for the Biodiversity Council is unclear.
- Who should "own" the connectivity map? Where does the connectivity work best fit? John Mankowski sees a natural fit with the Council because of its strong relationship with the private sector.
- Biodiversity Council members can help to articulate the perspectives of their stakeholder entities.
- The Biodiversity Council has been extremely careful in its messaging—its strength is its inclusivity and its sensitivity to business and private landowners.

- The connectivity analysis could bring baggage that could affect the council's effectiveness. The issue does not have a good track record with private landowners (e.g., Yellowstone to Yukon initiative).
- The Biodiversity Council's guidance on this issue is extremely important.
- The Council could be the place for the Connectivity Workgroup to address stakeholder concerns.

John Mankowski asked the Council to make clear recommendations to the Governor's Office by the June meeting. This should include a clear statement about 1) structure (the connection between the Biodiversity Council and the Washington Habitat Connectivity Work Group) and 2) using the information (how to use this information to make the right decisions at the right time).

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

MEETING WRAP-UP AND NEXT STEPS:

Maggie hopes to finalize appointments to the council by June. The June meeting will include:

- A progress report on the Scorecard.
- The council budget for the coming year.
- A decision on relationship with the Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group.

John Garner invited the Council to Northwest Trek for the June Meeting and to an upcoming Bio-Blitz, May 15–17 in the Roy-McKenna area.

Meeting adjourned at 3:25.

Minutes approved June 3, 2009
Josh Weiss, Chair